
**CHAPTER 6:
SHIFTING THE
PARADIGM**

This first year of the MHTP has been devoted to developing a shared understanding and common agenda for Transformation. The outcomes and strategies presented to the TWG provide the direction and form the vision underlying this CMHP. The responsibility of converting these visionary action plans into reality rests with the Transformation Partners. The TWG and the MHTP staff will be working in Year 2 and beyond to facilitate and support participating agencies in their efforts to translate the vision into concrete actions.

The MHTP team has been working closely with staff in partner agencies to inventory the efforts already planned or under way that help to move the Transformation agenda forward, starting first with a review of state agency strategic plans recently submitted to the Governor. Agencies have told the Transformation Project staff that there are many activities they are involved with that are not listed in their strategic plans. We will inventory these strategies for inclusion in next year's plan.

Also, state agencies are currently developing budget requests and proposed legislative packages for the 2007-2009 budget period. By September, the agencies will submit these requests to the Governor's Office. Because of the need to finalize the Comprehensive Mental health Plan by early September, these budget/legislative requests will not be included in the first year's plans. Once we know what is incorporated into the Governor's legislative package, and which items are supported by the Legislature, a more accurate gap analysis between what the community recommendations are and what agency activities are planned. Once that is done, the state will have a better idea about where to focus its resources to address community recommendations.

It is apparent that years of funding services for the most in need has created a "mental illness" system; not a mental health system. The TWG, consumers, families, partner agencies, and policy leaders, recognize the importance of more clearly defining mental health, linking it to physical health, and focusing on a public health approach for creating healthy individuals, families and communities. With increasing focus on these aspects of Transformation,

SUMMARY

there is a growing understanding of policy implications for the state's mental health system. In Year 2, the TWG will engage all Transformation Partners in a crucial discussion about how and when a systemic redesign of the system of providing mental health services in Washington will occur.

If we are to achieve our objectives related to improving the health of all individuals and families residing in Washington State, we must have a strong vision. The Washington Health Foundation is on the right track with their "Healthiest State in the Nation Campaign." Key organizations must come together, agree on a vision, establish cross system goals/objectives, identify a core set of outcome measures to track our progress and focus our resources in such a way as to provide more holistic services to individuals and families.

In our quest to raise the bar regarding improving the health of all citizens, we must broaden our philosophical approach to include mental health as an essential component of overall health. It is imperative that we acknowledge the interrelationships of mind, body and spirit. When we talk about health we must incorporate the spectrum of medical, mental health, alcohol/drug and related health areas. By viewing health in this broad fashion, our planned interventions will become more holistic and effective. We cannot continue the traditional piecemeal approach in which partial services are rationed to those in most desperate need, and expect peak results.

Governor Gregoire and the Washington State Legislature have recognized that our young children are our greatest assets. If we do not prepare these children for adolescence and adulthood, we will face tremendous social and economic costs well into the future through poor academic achievement, increased criminal activity, unprepared and untrained workforce, family strife, poor mental health, increased alcohol/drug use and overall decreased health of our families. On the other hand, if we focus more attention on being preventive in our approach and are more holistic in our strategies to assisting families in developing healthier lifestyles, then we can reduce the cost of more expensive government services in the long term.

**Transformation
Theme 1:**

The Mental Health Transformation Project leadership agrees with the vision of making Washington state the Healthiest State in the Nation and we believe that the state must place much more emphasis on prevention and early intervention as well as cross system planning if we expect to improve the health of our residents. Improved health of citizens will in the long run result in less demand on publicly funded health and mental health care systems. At the same time, our subcommittees' work reflects that our current system of care, while expensive, is inadequate. We don't purchase enough of the needed services, in some cases purchase services that aren't wanted or valued, and have an evolved benefits package in public mental health particularly where only the most ill citizens qualify, and usually require the most costly care, draining limited financial resources. Our subcommittees have articulated through their hard work, a strong set of recommendations for addressing the ills of the current system.

The Transformation Grant Team recommends a dual approach, one effort seeking system improvements, recommended by the subcommittees; the other addressing prevention and health promotion, recognizing that failure to address these issues dooms the state to make patchwork improvements to the current system, only on the margins. The challenges are many. The resources are limited. If Washington is to become the healthiest state in the union, it will require a commitment to both: To prevention, early intervention and health promotion, AND to improvements in the current system. True transformation can only occur if we do both.

Reviewing the work of the past year, six major forward-looking themes have emerged that should infuse and guide the work of the MHTP in Year 2 and beyond.

The State of Washington views mental health as part of overall health.

This theme does not necessitate any structural change. Rather it promotes a philosophical approach where mental health is an assumed part of a person's overall health. This supports the contention that health is about mind, body and spirit. The Governor may want to distribute a policy directive or Executive Order

**Transformation
Theme 2:**

directing this approach. Further, the Legislature may want to pass a resolution supporting this approach.

Mental Health is incorporated into existing prevention and early intervention initiatives and more coordination occurs among these programs.

While there have been a variety of prevention and early intervention strategies implemented in Washington State, most have been focused on very specific population groups (preschool, elementary school, youth at risk for tobacco use or substance abuse), few have perceived their charge as broad health initiatives and few have involved workers from the mental health field as part of their planning and policy team. The Governor could create an Executive Policy Position on Prevention and Early Intervention. This person could work with various agencies to inventory prevention/early intervention programs and develop a clear vision with strategies to ensure coordination across these initiatives. And, all of these strategies could follow the approach that a healthy Washington is about focusing on a healthy mind, body and spirit.

**Transformation
Theme 3:**

Following the lead of the Washington Health Foundation, state agencies, with leadership from the Governor, Legislature and Superintendent of Public Instruction, could develop a core set of bench marks (out come measures) to track the health of Washington state residents.

Essentially this theme proposes that Washington State develop an annual report card that tracks key measures that monitor improvements of health status for Washington state residents and compares our progress to that of national benchmarks where applicable. Several state agencies already produce reports using this framework that may simply need to be expanded.

**Transformation
Theme 4:**

State agencies will increase opportunities for consumers/families to establish agency priorities and direction.

The intent here is to ensure systems are more consumer and family driven. While this mantra has been adopted by many health care systems, there has been little or no documentation of how health care

**Transformation
Theme 5:**

systems have actually included consumers/families in system development or delivery other than conducting consumer satisfaction surveys. State agencies and their contractors must clearly define, as part of their strategic plans, how consumer/family involvement will be increased in the planning and delivery of services.

State agencies will improve cross system data collection, data analysis and data reporting systems that focus not only on outputs but report on actual outcomes-reductions in negative consequences and improvements in overall consumer/family/community health indicators.

This theme supports the Governor's Government Management and Accountability Program and encourages agencies to identify cross-system impacts. For instance, what family/individual/community risk factors affect a student's readiness to learn? One has to look beyond classroom size and teacher training. One also has to look at the health (mind, body and spirit) of that individual student and their family/community environment.

**Transformation
Theme 6:**

State agencies, local government, providers, advocates, consumers, and families will make every effort to implement the specific recommendations of the subcommittees. Cross-system collaborations that focus not only on symptoms, but on citizens overall health, wellness and recovery must be paramount if the system is to improve, and we are to reduce negative consequences and improve the lives of our consumers, family members, and our communities.

This theme supports all the subcommittee recommendations and encourages agencies to identify cross-system opportunities for improvement. These efforts support and build upon efforts already underway across all state agencies to improve outcomes, increase voice of consumers and family members in decisions, and develop more effective, efficient, evidence-based and promising programs to the forefront as standard practice in the Washington State network of mental health care.